



# 10 Ways to Make More Time for Language Learning

HOW TO FIND TIME IN EVERY DAY FOR A NEW LANGUAGE

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# FROM THE AUTHOR



“

Five words I never want to hear in reference to language learning: **I just don't have time.** Everyone has the time to commit to a language, but they simply don't know where to find it or how to make the best use of it. I've designed this eBook to help every language lover find the time for a new language in each day.

–Meaghan, @meagmcgon  
Social Media Coordinator, Transparent Language

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# CHAPTER ONE

“There’s never enough  
time to do all the  
nothing you want.”

– Bill Watterson

# IDENTIFY TIME WASTERS

DON'T LET YOUR TIME END UP IN THE TRASH



If your schedule is bursting at the seams, you probably don't even have time to think about wasting time. Or do you? For one week, keep a detailed account of your activities from the time you wake up until the time your head hits the pillow at the end of the day. When the week is up, go back and take a good look your time inventory.

Identify your areas of weakness and address them. Did you sit down for one TV show and get sucked into the show that came on afterwards, too? Did you spend an extra hour at the library because you kept interrupting your studies to respond to texts?

Don't worry—you don't have to cut out your time wasters entirely. When it comes to carving up your time, it's all about moderation:

- **Can't miss your favorite TV show?** Go ahead, watch it! But hit the mute button during the commercials and devote that break to flipping through some flash cards. A 60-minute TV show only runs for about 41 minutes—that's 19 minutes of study time without sacrificing your weekly date with Game of Thrones.
- **Can't ignore your friend's texts?** Well, you wouldn't want to be rude, would you? But instead of letting him or her interrupt you 25 times in the next hour, step outside the library for 5 minutes to give them a call! You'll cover the same ground more quickly and stave off carpal tunnel for another day.

Be creative and look for small ways to make your time wasters a little less wasteful. You don't have to overhaul your schedule, sacrifice your guilty pleasures, or become a hermit to learn a language.

Remember, you don't need to hit the books for hours and hours every day. If you can scrounge together 20–30 minutes a day to devote to a language, you're in great shape.

# CHAPTER TWO

“Time you enjoy wasting  
is not wasted time.”

– Marthe Troly-Curtin

# USE UP DEAD TIME

## KILL YOUR DEAD TIME WITH A LITTLE STUDYING

Often times, you waste time doing something (Words With Friends, I'm looking at you), but sometimes you waste time doing *nothing*. Go back to that time inventory you made. This time, instead of *removing* activities from that list, look for "dead time" where you can *add* in a little learning.

Dead time is any time you spend staring off into space, waiting idly for something. You don't have to be a great multi-tasker to fill this time with another task. Focus on situations during the day when your body is active, but your mind is not:

- **On the commute:** If you drive, plug in your iPod and listen to a podcast or jam out to some tunes in your target language. If you take a train or bus, you have even more options, including mobile apps and books.
- **In the bathroom:** Get a shower radio or bring your laptop in the bathroom and play YouTube videos while you shower, brush your teeth, put on your make-up, or curl your hair.

- **At the store:** If the line at the grocery store is painfully long and there's one of those extreme couponers in front you, you might as well pull out your phone and hop on your favorite [language app](#).
- **At the gym:** Don't cut your run short or skip out on leg day to study. Add a handful of foreign language songs into your gym playlist instead, and pay close attention to the lyrics while you work out.

While you may not have much *downtime*, you probably have a lot of *dead time* through the day where you can sneak in a little language exposure.



# CHAPTER THREE

“You may delay, but  
time will not.”

– Benjamin Franklin

# PLAN AHEAD (NOT JUST FOR STUDYING)

## PLAN MORE THAN YOUR STUDIES TO SAVE PRECIOUS TIME

Planning language lessons in advance is great, but only if you actually find the time to do them. Try planning out other parts of your life to save up a few precious minutes.

- **Group your trips together:** Why not take care of all of your errands at once? If you're already out in town, drop by the pet store and get food for Fido, even if you won't run out for 3 more days. Don't wait until the last minute to run out and get something—do it in advance and save yourself a trip.
- **Organize your day:** Keep everything in a designated place—your keys, phone, wallet, and so on should be easily accessible at all times to avoid those oh-so-fun games of hide and seek in the morning. Take it a step further and lay out your outfit and pack your gym bag ahead of time. Small tasks seem much more difficult in the wee hours of the morning, so get a head start the night before!

- **Plan meals:** Plan a week's worth of meals at one time, and make one big trip to the grocery store. It will save you a few trips to the store each week, which can add up big time. Not to mention the time you will save by not staring in your fridge wondering what you can slap together for dinner at the last minute. Be sure to make a list before you go to the store to avoid wandering around the aisles wasting time (and money).

Staying organized and planning ahead will save you time and productivity throughout the week, leaving you time and energy to reallocate to your language studies.

# CHAPTER FOUR

“Time is what we want  
most, but what we use  
worst.”

– Benjamin Franklin

# DISCONNECT

PUT DOWN YOUR DEVICE, PICK UP A NEW LANGUAGE

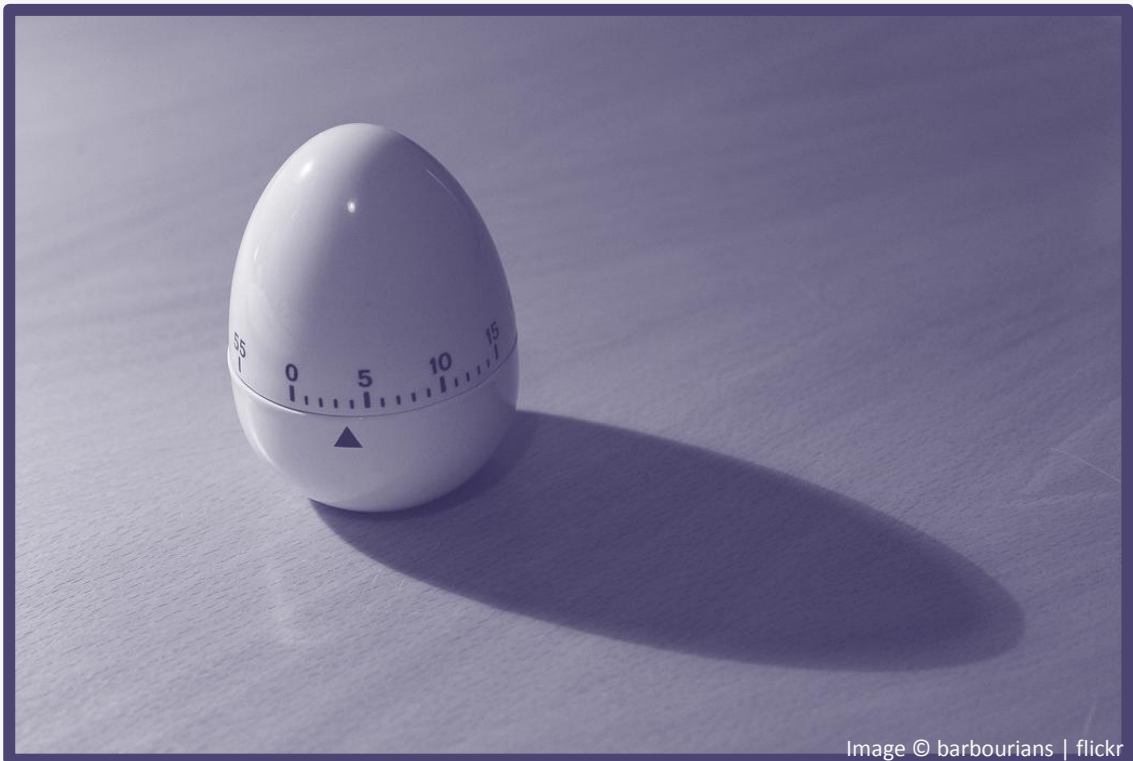


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We love our devices just as much as you do—after all, we're a tech company! But when was the last time you were able to check one e-mail or search just one thing on Google and not end up sucked into the web for 20 minutes until you suddenly find yourself looking at cat memes? You're not alone, but that doesn't mean you shouldn't learn to limit yourself.

- **Set time limits:** If you don't have enough willpower to quit on your own, check out [www.rescuetime.com](http://www.rescuetime.com). The site allows you to monitor your Internet usage and set time restrictions on the specific sites you spend too much time on. Go ahead and block those celeb gossip sites and reallocate your Internet time to language resources, like our [language and culture blogs](#)!
- **Designate specific times:** If e-mail is your big problem, designate 3–4 specific times throughout the day when you will check your messages in bulk. Other than those times, keep your e-mail closed and turn off your alerts. You're wasting time and ruining your productivity by abandoning your current task to check up on every single incoming message.

Try to commit to 60 minutes of complete “disconnectivity” a day, and see how much time it frees up for you. If you can't, change up your surfing habits and use online resources to learn a language.

Turn [social media](#) into a language-learning tool by following language accounts. Spice up your inbox with a [Word of the Day e-mail](#), so if you *have* to check it, there will be a little nugget of language in there to keep you engaged. Turn your distractions into your tools—it's a win-win!

# CHAPTER FIVE

“Time is what keeps  
everything from  
happening at once.”

– Ray Cummings

# SCHEDULE TIME

DON'T PENCIL IT IN, PERMANENT MARKER IT IN

You've probably noticed a trend: being organized and having a plan is paramount to freeing up your time. One of the best ways to make that happen is to keep a calendar. Physically writing down or drawing your schedule is a great way to visualize your time and identify gaps in your day.

Scheduling an appointment, meeting, or event is both a reminder and a reinforcer. It reminds you that you have something to do, but also reinforces your commitment to doing so. Just *saying* that you will study from 6:00–6:30 isn't as effective as writing it in your planner and blocking that time out in Outlook.

If you had a meeting scheduled with a language tutor, you would show up. *So why not schedule a meeting with yourself?* It may sound silly, but you want to learn a language for a reason, so treat it with the same significance that you place upon other commitments. Block off the time in your schedule—it will hold you accountable and avoid letting something else take its place.

- **Be mindful of time:** Schedule a study session when you're most inclined to do some serious thinking. If you're a night owl, don't pretend you're going to wake up early to study. If you're most productive in the mornings, fit your study time in during breakfast or your commute, not after a long day at the office.
- **Be consistent:** Sometimes you'll have to fit in a language on the go, but try to be as consistent as possible. Repeating your studies around the same time every day will reinforce the habit and turn it into a ritual, just like going to the gym straight from work every day. It will become a natural part of your day that flows with the rest of your schedule.



# CHAPTER SIX

“Inelegantly, and  
without my consent,  
time passed.”

– Miranda July

# HAVE OPTIONS

## ALWAYS HAVE A PLAN B FOR STUDYING

Life is unpredictable, especially when you're busy juggling so many things. You know the days—you're just sitting down to read a few chapters in your new target language novel during your lunch break when the school nurse calls to have you pick up your child. There goes your study time for the day, right?

Not if you have a back-up plan. Keep a few extra learning activities available to you in case of emergency:

- **Have materials at your disposal:** Don't ever skip out on studying because you forgot your materials at home. Store a pack of vocabulary flash cards in your desk drawer. Buy an extra book and keep it in your car's glove compartment.
- **Be flexible:** If you normally study at a certain time, but something comes up, don't give up on it. If you prefer to study in a specific place, but can't get there, don't call it quits! Environment and timing are important, but daily exposure is crucial.

- **Keep it low-tech:** You now know how to turn technology into your best friend for language learning, but don't depend too heavily on it. When the power cuts out during a storm, or you can't find reliable Internet connection, have physical materials available.
- **Keep it high-tech:** On the other hand, your devices are portable language-learning treasure chests. Browse online and bookmark your favorite language resources or sign up for an online course. When you leave for a two-week business trip, you won't have to pack any learning materials or worry about running out, because it's all on your phone or laptop. You could even kick it up a notch by setting your devices in the language you're learning.



# CHAPTER SEVEN

“Time is the most  
valuable thing a man  
can spend.”

– Diogenes Laertius

# BUY TIME

## YOU CAN'T BUY MORE TIME, BUT YOU CAN BUY FREE TIME

You can't purchase a 25<sup>th</sup> hour in the day, but you can quite literally buy yourself an hour of free time. This is not the ideal solution, but for those of you whose schedules are truly overflowing, who still desperately want or need to learn a language, forking over a little cash can go a long way.

- **For the kids:** Hire a babysitter a few times a week and head to the local library or your favorite coffee shop for a quick bite to eat and some studying.
- **For the house:** Hire a nanny, or offer your children allowance to take care of some chores while you study. They'll learn some discipline and you'll learn a language.
- **For the office:** This certainly won't be an option for everyone, but if you're in a position of power, hire an intern or assistant to whom you can delegate a few tasks each day.



- **For the gym:** Buy a few personal training sessions and learn how to get the most out of your workout. Chances are a trainer can show you how to shorten your gym trips by working out more efficiently.
- **For the store:** Again, hiring a nanny to take care of errands during the day is not a bad option. There's also services out there through which you can order groceries online and have them delivered to your home. It saves you time, and doesn't allow you to sneak those Oreos™ into the cart at the last minute.
- **For meals:** Speaking of food, order in once or twice a week to save time on cooking. It doesn't have to be an endless pizza party in your house either. Try to find a restaurant that serves food of your target culture and make a learning experience out of it. For your sake, I hope you're learning Thai or Italian.

Ideally, you will be able to locate time without resorting to any of these measures. But if you're really strapped for time, there's certainly no shame in paying for a few moments to learn another language.

# CHAPTER EIGHT

“Each person who gets stuck in time gets stuck alone.”

– Alan Lightman

# TEAM UP

LEARNING ON YOUR OWN DOESN'T MEAN YOU'RE ALONE



Whether you *feel* like you have to do everything on your own, or you simply *want* to do it all your way, making time for a language will require leaning on others for a change. Rely on your spouse, children, friends, co-workers, and neighbors to take over some of your daily burden. You don't have to call in any favors, either. Coordinate with the people in your life to mutually lighten the load.

- **Set up a carpool network:** Stop shuffling your kids to and from every one of their activities. Coordinate with the other parents at these events and split the miles. You'll take the kids to soccer on Monday if she takes them to band practice on Thursday. You'll save time and be a little friendlier to the environment, a win-win.
- **Start a food swap:** This may sound strange, but if you're already making 2 pounds of your family's favorite chicken dish, why not double it and drop some off with a neighbor? The next night your neighbor can return the favor and save you time in the kitchen. Planning a food swap is a great way to bring a group of busy neighbors together, try new foods and find new recipes, and, of course, make time for other things.
- **Learn with someone else:** There's more benefits to this than just saving time, obviously. But chances are you'd like to spend some time with your spouse or your best friend once in a while. Kill two birds with one stone and convince them to learn the language with you, and spend some of your time together working on it.

Figure out what you spend a lot of time doing that your friends, family, or neighbors spend a lot of their time doing, and find ways to share the load. It's another excuse to see the people you love, and free up some evenings throughout the week.

# CHAPTER NINE

“The wisest are the most  
annoyed at the loss of  
time.”

– Dante Alighieri

# WORK DOUBLE-DUTY

IF YOU HAVE THINGS TO DO, DO THEM IN A NEW LANGUAGE

Work smarter, not harder. Don't rush through your to-do list to make time for language learning. Kill two birds with one stone and turn your to-do list into a series of learning activities:

- **Write your to-do list in the target language:** This is an easy one, but every little bit counts. Take a second to look up words you don't know—chances are if it's something on your to-do list, it's a word worth knowing!
- **Recite the words for your laundry:** Keep vocab fresh in your mind by naming each article of clothing you fold. If that's too basic, describe each item in terms of size, color, material, etc. If *that's* too basic, practice making comparisons and superlatives with your clothing.
- **Set your GPS in the target language:** Running errands? Even if you know how to get to the dry cleaner and the bank, turn on your GPS and listen to the directions in the language you're learning. If you somehow get lost, you'll get to learn a new word: "Recalculating!"

- **Write your grocery list in the target language:** Another easy way to keep the language in focus. As you're whipping together your recipe, recite the steps to yourself in your new language. Again, look up any food items or culinary terms you don't know. After all, you've got to eat in any language!

This strategy works best for activities that involve writing or talking to yourself, but there are a surprising number of those in a day when you think about it. If you happen to walk around speaking to yourself in a foreign language, we won't judge you—it's for the greater good!



# CHAPTER TEN

“All we have to decide is  
what to do with the time  
that is given us.”

– J.R.R. Tolkien

# ABANDON PERFECTIONISM

AT SOME POINT, SOMETHING'S GOTTA GIVE



If you're uber busy, you may not only be trying to do everything, but also trying to do everything *perfectly*. If you really want to free up time (and relieve some stress), abandon your desire for perfection. Pushing yourself and striving to do your best is never a bad thing, of course, but at the end of the day, you only have 24 hours to work with.

- **Clean less:** Perfectionism manifests in a number of ways, one of which may be cleaning. Don't let your laundry basket rival Kilimanjaro, but take it easy on yourself. Trade in 10 minutes of dusting for 10 minutes on your [Byki app](#), and the world won't end.
- **Be decisive:** If you're trying too hard to make everything perfect, you risk overthinking your decisions. Think clearly and objectively about the task at hand and make an executive decision. Don't waste time and stress yourself out by procrastinating.
- **Say no:** The ability to say no is an important skill, whether you're trying to free up time for language learning or not. Prioritize your activities and determine where language learning falls. Then try turning down a few commitments that rank lower on your list. Remember that as you succeed, you are faced with more and more opportunities, and must learn to prioritize them. The opportunities coming your way are a result of your hard work, and turning them down does not make you a failure. Everyone is faced with the same time constraints, so your co-worker or friend will understand.

Life is short, time is of the essence, and all of those other clichés. Resolve to be excellent at just a few things, such as speaking your new language, and don't sweat the rest.

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